measures required urgently to improve exports. Interest on export credit has been reduced by one percentage point. It has been decided to set up an Export Promotion Board to resolve inter-Ministerial issues and to give a national priority thrust to export efforts.

Procurement Target for Non-Basmati Rice and its Export

656.SHRI SOLIPETA RAMACHANDRA REDDY: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) the quality of non-basmati rice expected to be exported during the year 1997-98;

(b) whether it is a fact that the procurement target for non-basmati rice for the year 1996-97 has fallen short; and

(c) if so, the reasons for non-basmati rice being allowed to be exported inspite of its shortage in the country?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI BOLLA BULI RAMAIAH): (a) The non-basmati rice exported would be mainly of fine and superfine varieties.

(b) No, Sir.

(c) Does not arise.

Proposal to Encourage Tea Plantation in non-Traditional Areas in Uttar Pradesh

657. SHRI RAJNATH SINGH SURYA: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have any proposal to encourage tea plantation in non-traditional areas;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor;

(c) whether Government have taken steps to promote traditional plantation sites in U.P.;

(d) whether Government have received any proposal from Uttar Pradesh to develop non-traditional sites for tea; and

(e) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI BOLLA BULI RAMAIAH): (a) and (b) With a view to augment production of tea and given the constraints on availability of land suitable for tea cultivation in the traditional areas, Government has been encouraging setting up of tea plantations in non-traditional areas where land suitable for tea cultivation is available.

(c) Yes, Sir.

(d) and (e) Following project proposals for financial assistance have been received by the Tea Board in March, 1997, from the Government of Uttar Pradesh, for development of tea plantations in non-traditional areas of the State:-

(i) Nucleus tea project at Kausani in Kumaon region with an outlay of Rs. 564.80 lakh.

(ii) Nucleus tea project at Nauri in Garhwal region with an outlay of Rs. 558.15 lakh.

The project proposals have been accepted in principle by the Board, subject to fulfilment of certain requirements before sanction and funding. This is being followed up by the Tea Board with the Government of Uttar Pradesh.

Ban of Export of Granite

658. SHRI BHAGABAN MAJHI: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have taken decision to impose ban on the export of granite;

(b) if so, since when; and

(c) the reasons for imposing such ban?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI BOLLA BULI RAMAIAH) (a) No, Sir.

(b) and (c) Do not arise.

Talks with Export Organisations to check the Declining Trend of Exports

659. SHRI S.M. KRISHA: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Indian exports

have sharply declined during last one year, if so, the details of exports that took place during last one year, month-wise and the earning of foreign exchange therefrom;

(b) whether his Ministry has recently held talks with different export organisation, trade and industries bodies of the country;

(c) if so, the details of the suggestions/ shortcoming pointed out by such organisations for declining trends; and

(d) the steps being taken to improve the exports from the country?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRYOF COMMERCE (SHRI BOLLA BULI RAMAIAH): (a) As per DGCIS data export growth at 4.12% in dollar terms was achieved in 1996-97 and sustained on a higher base. Monthwise foreign exchnage earnings are presented in the statement enclosed (*See* below).

(b) and (c) The Government recently held a meeting with representatives of trade and industry to discuss the problems faced by the exporters and immediate steps that may be taken to boost export performance. Some of the factors cited and suggestions given were lowering of the threshold limit of Star/Super Star trading house/export house/star trading house, announcing the DEPB rates at the earliest, allowing deemed export benefit to all exporters on monthly basis besides reduction in interest rates on export credit, improved infrastructure facilities etc.

(d) The Government has already revised the threshold limit of Export House/Trading House/Star Trading House as suggested by the exporters. DEPB rates of 1192 items have been notified. The deemed export benefit of refund of terminal excise duty and deemed export draw back can now be availed by all exporters on monthly basis also. In addition, general export promotion measures are continously being taken by the Government to promote exports through simplification of policy and procedures, improving bilateral trade, debottle-necking of export infrastructure etc.

Statement

Monthwise Indian Exports during 1996-97

(US billion dollar)

Months	**Value**
April 1996	2.90
May 1996	2.75
June 1996	2.60
July 1996	2.67
August 1996	2.69
September 1996	2.64
October 1996	2.68
November 1996	2.53
December 1996	2.77
January 1997	2.91
February 1997	2.66
March 1997	3.30

Export and Import with China and Hong Kong

660. SHRI S.M. KRISHNA: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state;

(a) the amount of export and imports with China and Hong Kong during last three years in dollar terms separately;

(b) whether any study has been conducted by his Ministry about the trade prospects/ problems following merger of Hong Kong with China recently;

(c) whether Indian industrialist or trade experts so far operating from Hong Kong had given/submitted any memoranda to the Government on trade aspect/implications of such merger; and

(d) if answers to parts (b) and (c) above be in affirmative, the steps Government have taken to maintain trade balance/relation following recent developments in Hong Kong?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI BOLLA BULI RAMAIAH): (a) The Amount of India's exports and imports during the last three years